

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Fred W. Slaughter, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

BOLIVAR ACT

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, as the Federal Government rightfully continues to levy devastating sanctions on Russia and punish Putin and his thugs for their horrific and unlawful invasion of Ukraine, we cannot, as the Biden administration has signaled it will, choose to empower one dictator so we can punish another.

Nicoles Maduro is the illegitimate, ruthless dictator in Venezuela. I traveled to the Colombia-Venezuela border and saw the suffering of the Venezuelan people at the hand of Maduro's regime. I met with Venezuelan refugees and got updates from Colombian officials on just how bad Venezuelans were being treated by Maduro's tyranny.

Venezuelan children walk for hours through dense forests, across rivers, and over terrorist-controlled territory just to get to a school in Colombia for an education and a meal. Mothers with young children came to Cucuta to get the only meal they would eat for 3 days. I met a pregnant woman who was forced to sleep on the streets of Venezuela because she was homeless. Think about that. I am a father and a grandfather. Imagine having to look at your 3-year-old child or grandchild in the eyes and tell them that they are not going to eat today because there is no food.

The pain, the hunger, the devastation—I cannot believe any human being would do this to young children. It was heartbreaking, and it was evil. And there is one man responsible for it: Nicoles Maduro.

Since my visit, things have only gotten worse. In what is one of the worst humanitarian crises in Latin American history, more than 6 million Venezuelans have fled Maduro's oppression in Venezuela since 2014.

In 2020, a factfinding mission for the United Nations determined that Maduro's regime has engaged in crimes against humanity, including unlawful executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and torture. The regime has imprisoned hundreds of its political opponents and forced countless more into exile. They have used the guise of the COVID-19 pandemic to further crack down on journalists and dissenters.

We know that what has been happening at the direction of Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela is horrific. That is why, in 2019, the previous administration signed an Executive order issuing a complete economic embargo on Venezuela.

We can all agree that the United States should not be bolstering such a disgusting socialist regime, and we cannot forget that any lifting of sanctions or show of appeasement toward Maduro's Venezuela will only further the suffering there and help its evil allies, like Russia, Cuba, communist China, and Iran, which actively support Maduro's abuses. So I and many others were deeply disturbed last week when we learned that President Biden secretly sent a team to Venezuela—secretly sent a team to Venezuela—and began negotiations on the potential purchase of Venezuelan oil and the easing of sanctions.

High gas prices caused by President Biden's war on American energy and Putin's invasion of Ukraine doesn't mean we can turn a blind eye to Maduro's genocide and oppression. We know that funds going to Maduro are used for terrorism in our hemisphere, and we know that Venezuela and Russia are aligned. If we support one, we support the other. That is why, just days after the American team left, the Russian Foreign Minister traveled to meet with the Venezuelan Vice President.

Now, I am glad the administration finally made the decision to stop buying Russian oil—I think it came too late—but I am glad the Biden administration reluctantly agreed not to purchase oil from Venezuela. We shouldn't be supporting Maduro or Putin. It would be foolish if we made the mistake of supporting one dictator so we could punish another dictator. Maduro has decided to be our enemy, and so is Putin. Neither of them deserves our money.

The Biden administration needs to realize that our enemies are not the world's only source of oil and natural gas. America has huge supplies of oil and natural gas, and we would have access to those resources right now if the Biden administration hadn't spent the past year relentlessly trying to destroy the U.S. oil industry.

On day 1, Biden killed the Keystone Pipeline, and 10,000—10,000—jobs alongside it were lost. Then he cut off new drilling contracts on public lands. The Biden EPA has added one ridiculous regulation after another to make it more expensive and harder for American oil manufacturers to do business. We went from being nearly energy independent and a net exporter in 2019 to begging cartels and ruthless dictators for oil. This is not American leadership, and it is not American independence.

It is long past time for the administration to admit that its ridiculous Green New Deal policies put our security at risk and hurt American families. Prices at the pump are at an all-time high across the Nation.

We should be solving this problem with our own resources and with our own workers, not with Maduro and his thugs. That is why I have introduced the Banning Operations and Leases with the Illegitimate Venezuelan Au-

thoritarian Regime Act, or the BOLIVAR Act. This bill would prohibit Federal Agencies from doing business with the oppressive Maduro regime. We can't stand by and let Maduro continue to commit genocide against his people, and we have to do everything possible to restrict the money Maduro uses to hold on to power and destabilize the region.

When I was Governor of Florida, I signed a bill that prevented State agencies from investing in companies doing business with the Government of Venezuela.

In 2019, my amendment to cut off funds to the Maduro regime was included in the National Defense Authorization Act.

In March of last year, my colleagues on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee agreed with me, and we unanimously passed the BOLIVAR Act through our committee.

I am thankful for Senators JACKY ROSEN, MARCO RUBIO, and THOM TILLIS, who have cosponsored this legislation and helped bring this legislation this far. I also want to thank Congressman MICHAEL WALTZ for introducing the companion bipartisan bill in the House of Representatives.

But we didn't introduce the bill only to have the Biden administration begin working with Maduro's thugs and bolstering the corrupt Venezuelan oil industry. We are trying to stop that, and no one should want to be on the side of Maduro's genocide.

I am grateful for the bipartisan support this bill has received, and I hope that the entire Senate will take a stand to support the fight for freedom and the people of Venezuela.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

SUPREME COURT NOMINATION

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise to speak on behalf of a few Federal judge nominees from the State of California.

In recognizing that, right now, many Americans are certainly following the news and the potential news of the Federal judiciary and are focusing on a nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court. As a member of the Judiciary Committee, I certainly look forward to hearing more from Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson next week as we conduct her confirmation hearing.

The choices for the Supreme Court are certainly critical for the future of our democracy, but the fact of the matter is—and the Presiding Officer knows I like numbers and knows I like data. So the important data point here is that it is only a tiny percentage of cases in our Federal court system that actually reach the U.S. Supreme Court. In fact, more than 90 percent of the Federal cases are decided at the district court level. That means the vast majority of people who interface with the Federal judiciary will only ever meet a district court judge, sitting on the other side of the bench, whether